

## ALGORITHM FOR CONDITIONAL DISCHARGE OF FORENSIC PSYCHIATRIC PATIENTS

Tija Žarković Palijan, Dražen Kovačević, Marina Kovač, Fahri Dervinja<sup>1</sup>, Marijana Sarilar

Forensic Institute, Dr. Ivan Barbot Neuropsychiatric Hospital at Popovača, <sup>1</sup>Clinic of Psychiatry, Pristina, Kosovo

Conditional discharge of forensic psychiatric patients who had committed criminal offence and were thus declared mentally incompetent, seems at the beginning of compulsory treatment/commitment very distant and blurred in the mist of time that will have to pass, both by therapists and by patients. In order to start a procedure of compulsory treatment, after the admission in Forensic Institute we act upon a defined treatment algorithm. In the first phase, i.e. during the first 6 weeks, the patient undergoes observation and triage procedures adjusted to his/her risk for violence factors. Also, refined psychiatric assessment is redone for the purposes of defining the treatment and risk for violence is assessed in accordance with HCR-20. After the first 6 weeks of observation in which pharmacotherapy is corrected, attitudes toward the treatment and associated behaviors are evaluated. In case stability is achieved and assessment indicates acceptance of the first treatment phase, plans for involvement in occupational and social therapy as well as psychotherapeutic treatments begin. The capability for therapeutic involvement is evaluated by some aspects of psychiatric diagnoses and by personal affinities and abilities of the patient. At the beginning, suitability for therapeutic involvement is also determined by the patient's risk for violent behaviors toward other patients and staff. In order to meet the requirements of successful functioning in the family and community, it is necessary to

achieve adequate remission stage, minimum illness-related threats and to establish satisfying family functioning between the patient and his/her family. It is then that plans for conditional discharge can begin. The duration of the conditional discharge for compulsorily treated psychiatric patients is 3 years, according to the Law on Protection of Mentally Disordered Patients. Within this period, the patient has to attend regular monthly monitoring appointments, either in the Forensic Institute or at his/her place of residence, but is obliged to come to monitoring appointments in the Forensic Institute once in 3 months. At the start of conditional discharge, according to the Law, the civil department of an authorized county court takes over admission of the patient into the forensic-psychiatric treatment system and monitors the patient once a year until he/she meets the requirements of conditional discharge. The court issues a decision on conditional discharge and after 3 years schedules a hearing for assessing the course of the conditional discharge. If the patient's functioning is seriously disturbed, conditional discharge can be repealed even without commission of a new criminal offence, or treatment is implemented instead, with the purpose to help the patient in overcoming the crises that he/she is faced with in time of the conditional discharge.

*Key words:* conditional discharge, treatment algorithm, forensic-psychiatric patient